A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

Opening of the New Church

IN

ISLEWORTH,

IN THE

County of *Middleſex,*

The Second Day of *March,* $170\frac{6}{7}$.

By *C. WILLIAMS,* M. A.

Lecturer of the ſaid Pariſh.

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To the Pious and Munificent Benefactors, who Contributed to the Rebuilding of the Parish-Church of *Isleworth*, this Sermon is humbly Dedicated.

Levit. XIX. 30.

Ye ſhall therefore keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary.

WE are here aſſembled again through the good Providence of God, and the liberal Benefaction of pious and well-diſpos'd Perſons; in the Front of whom deſervedly ſtands that worthy Gentleman, who hath erected a laſting Monument to his pious Memory in this ſtately Structure; and of whom we may juſtly ſay ſomewhat like that which the *Jews* once ſaid to our Saviour, concerning their generous Benefactor the good *Centurion*, *That he lov'd our Nation, and hath built us a Synagogue:* We muſt acknowledge him for our chief Founder, who laid the Foundation of our Church, in that noble Donative bequeath'd in his laſt Will and Teſtament towards the Re-edifying; (if others, mov'd by his great Example, ſhou'd join in ſo Religious a Work) or at leaſt towards the Repairing the Houſe of God's Worſhip, that it might no longer look like an Houſe of Deſolation: He hath done this, I ſay, to his Immortal Commendation; and whilſt I am publiſhing this grateful Acknowledgment, I hope, nay, I am confident, that I am only executing your tacit Commands, and diſcharging a ſtrict Duty to that eminent Perſon, *who being dead, yet ſpeaketh*; and whoſe liberal Benefaction, if we ſhou'd ſtifle in, theſe very Stones wou'd ſpeak out, and become Heralds to proclaim his juſt Praiſes. Next to him, you ought all to have your juſt Share in the Glory of ſo laudable an Undertaking, for contributing ſo freely to the Honour of God's Worſhip, for carrying on the Work with ſuch a quick and wonderful Diſpatch, that ye have compleated it in a much narrower Compaſs of

Time, than cou'd reaſonably have been expected; and have plainly ſhew'd the World, that Church-work can never go on with a ſlack and a ſlow Hand, ſo long as it hath ſuch proper and worthy Supra-viſors to look after it, as are Men fearing God, and hating Covetouſneſs. This, give me leave to ſpeak to your preſent Praiſe; I leave your full Commendation to be celebrated by Poſterity. And now return to my Text, which puts us in mind of two great Points of Reverence due to the Great God that made us, and all the World, whereof one reſpects his Sabbath, the other his Sanctuary. I ſhall not concern my ſelf with the firſt of theſe at preſent, but ſhall chuſe rather to ſtand upon the latter, as moſt ſuitable to the Occaſion for which we are now aſſembled together.

And whilſt we are opening a New Houſe for the Worſhip of God, it cannot but be very ſeaſonable to put you in mind of that great Reverence that is due to the Lord's Sanctuary; that when we come hither, we ought to fall low on our Knees, and to behave our ſelves with that awful Reſpect, and humble Proſtration, that becomes poor ſinful Creatures, when they approach before ſo Great a Majeſty as reſides in this Place.

In Proſecution of this Subject, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt, The Place which we are commanded to Reverence.

Secondly, Wherein this Reverence due to the Sanctuary of God, doth principally conſiſt.

And firſt of the Place we are commanded to Reverence. *My Sanctuary*, that is, the Place ſet apart for God's Solemn Worſhip: It is his, noting the Sacredneſs of ſuch Places as are dedicated to the Divine Worſhip. It's true they have not any inherent Sanctity in them, more than other Places, yet have they a Relative Holineſs, as they are appropriated to the Service of God, and conſecrated to the Exerciſe of Religion; and therefore after once they have been given, and dedicated to this ſolemn and ſacred Uſe, they cannot be converted to any other, without the Guilt of Sacrilege, and Sinning even againſt the Law of Nature; by which all Places ſet apart for the Rites of Religion, became

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Sacred and Unalienable, and were look'd upon as God's Peculiar. Even the Temples of the Heathens, though their Gods were only the Work of Men's Hands, which had Eyes and saw not, Ears and heard not, and Mouths and spake not, yet the Temples of these Dumb Idols, were (I say) ever observ'd with the most reverend and awful Respect. But above all, what a mighty Veneration did the *Jews* constantly pay to the Place where the Great *Jehovah* dwelt? how sacred were its Courts, and how holy and hallowed was every thing that belong'd to it? Nay, 'tis observable, that the very City in which the Temple was erected, became Holy for the Temples sake; insomuch, that a dead Body was not to be suffer'd to lie in it for one Night, nor were any dead Men's Bones permitted to be carryed thro' the Holy City; with many other nice Injunctions, which would be both tedious and needless to be mention'd. How greatly therefore is God to be fear'd in the *Assembly* of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him?

Now for erecting and setting apart Places for celebrating Divine Service, we have a very ancient Warrant; for this pious Custom seems to take its Rise from the Instinct of Nature, and has also been constantly approv'd of by God from the Beginning of the World; and therefore those are much mistaken, who wou'd have it to take its Origin from the Tabernacle, or moving Temple, which God appointed *Moses* to make at *Mount Sinai*: No, it was of a much elder Date, as ancient as the Beginning of Time, for what we read to the contrary; for it is plain that *Adam*, during his short Possession of *Paradise*, had where to present himself before the Lord; for we read that after he and his Wife had sinned, they hid themselves, or wou'd not come to the Place where God was us'd to meet them. And we find in *Gen.* 4. 3. that his Sons *Cain* and *Abel*, when Man was banish'd out of *Paradise*, had a fix'd Place whereunto to bring their Offerings and Sacrifices.

After the Flood, we read of *Noah*'s building an Altar immediately upon his landing out of the Ark: And *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, wheresoever they came to

pitch their Tents, erected Places for Divine Worſhip; that is, Altars with Incloſures; and this they did without any ſpecial Command from God. *Jacob*, in particular, vow'd a Place, that he would appropriate to the Service of God under the Name of God's Houſe, *Gen.* 28. 20. And this indeed is the earlieſt Account that we meet with, which gives the Church the Name of God's Houſe, as is obſerv'd by a learned Critic.

And if we go lower ſtill, we find that *Moſes* before the Ark, and that glorious Tabernacle were yet made, pitch'd a Tabernacle for that purpoſe without the Camp, whither every one that ſought the Lord was to reſort, which they did by Tradition, and as a thing of cuſtom receiv'd from their Forefathers, to appropriate ſome Place holy unto the Lord.

Afterwards God gave expreſs command for the Building of the great Tabernacle to the Children of *Iſrael*, that he might take up a particular place of Reſidence among them, and ſo pitch his Tent in the midſt of the Congregation. And ſo God, for a great while, continu'd his dwelling between Curtains, becauſe the low Circumſtances his People were then under, would not well afford them to build any ſtately Structure, ſuitable to the Majeſty of that Great God that inhabiteth Eternity.

But when *David* came to the Throne, and the People began to enjoy Peace round about them, then the King had it in his Heart to erect a more magnificent Building to the honour of God; and the good Prince was ſo intent upon the pious Work; that he vow'd that he would not climb up into his Bed, nor ſuffer the Temples of his Head to take any Reſt, until he ſhould have found out a Place for the Temple of the Lord, an Habitation for the mighty God of *Jacob*.

But his pious Intentions God did not ſuffer to take effect, and ſo the Work was put by during his Reign, partly by reaſon of the Wars, which that good King was neceſſarily engag'd in, but chiefly (as the Learned *Grotius* probably conjectures) becauſe he had Blood upon him. And altho' he had heartily repented of the Crimſon Sin, and God had as heartily forgiven him, yet he

he would not ſuffer him to found the Temple, but reſerv'd it for his Son and Succeſſor King *Solomon*, whoſe Throne was ſettled in Peace and Quietneſs.

At the beginning of this King's Reign the Foundation was laid, and the Building at length happily perfected; a Structure ſo Glorious and Stately, that the World never before, nor ſince, ſaw its Fellow. There wanted no Coſt either in the Fundamental or Ornamental Charges, to render it at once the Beauty and the Wonder of the whole Earth. God himſelf appear'd to be the chief Architect and Projector of his own Houſe, both by drawing out the Model, and ordering the Materials, all which beſpoke it to be the Contrivance of Divine Wiſdom. The Building it ſelf was ſtately and magnificent, even to a Wonder; and the Furniture and the Utenſils of the Temple ſo very rich and coſtly, that were it not deliver'd down to us upon ſacred Record, the degenerate Age in which we live, wou'd hardly think it credible, that thoſe pious Ages ſhould have been ſo free and willing to offer up their Riches towards the erecting of God's Houſe. The greedy Worldlings, and the covetous Miſers of theſe evil Days, (in which our Saviour's Prophecy is but too literally and viſibly fulfill'd, *that the Love of many ſhall wax cold*) ſuch mucking Earth-worms (I ſay) would have been ready to charge the *Jews* of old with Extravagance for contributing ſo largely, and ſo chearfully to their Temple; and wou'd have look'd with an evil Eye upon our brave Anceſtors the Primitive Chriſtians, who, when the Heat of Perſecution began to abate, and the Secular Government to ſmile upon them, eſpecially when they came to be ſhelter'd under the warm Wing of an Emperour, who was himſelf a Proſelyte to the Croſs of Chriſt, were ſo intent upon building Churches, and laying out their Riches for the Advancement of God's Honour and Worſhip, that 'twas fear'd at laſt, leſt thoſe vaſt Contributions to the Church, ſhou'd in a great meaſure drain away the Opulency of the Empire. Oh what is become of that brave and generous Spirit now adays! Whither is it fled? Where hath it hid it ſelf? All that Genero-

ſity and Nobleneſs of Soul, that ſo eminently ſhin'd forth in our Fathers of old, is long ſince ſhrunk into a contraction and narrowneſs of Spirit. We are apt to think, that buying a Farm, or a Yoke of Oxen, is a much diſcreeter way of laying out our Mony, than upon Building Churches, and ſo far are we (generally ſpeaking) from being ready to lend a helping Hand to raiſe up a new Houſe for God's Holy Worſhip, that we think hard of keeping thoſe in any decent Repair, which our pious Forefathers erected with ſo much Coſt and Labour, and left ready built and finiſhed to our Hands; witneſs the ſad Plight, and forlorn Appearance of thoſe that ſtand ſo nigh the great Metropolis of the Nation, many of which look more like the Receptacles of Bats and Owls, than Places for Divine Worſhip; and by their being ſo ſcandalouſly neglected, ſeem to ſhow forth nothing leſs, than as if God had forſaken and abhorr'd his Sanctuary. We are indeed a People peculiarly remarkable for our exact Neatneſs and Decency in our own Houſes, inſomuch, that there is ſcarce any Nation round about us that can vie with us in this particular; but then that Credit and Glory which we get at home, we ſhamefully eclipſe when we come to ſhew our Churches, which are indeed a foul Stain to the *Engliſh* Honour, and have brought the moſt excellent Religion in the World into Contempt, by reaſon of the groſs Neglect of our Churches. When we travel into *France* or *Spain*, or into any of the Roman Catholick Countries, and behold the Magnificence of their Church-Buildings, the Coſtlineſs of their Furniture and Utenſils, the rich Variety of their Paintings and Carvings; how can we chuſe but bluſh to ſee how vaſtly we are out-ſhin'd, even by thoſe very Countries, whoſe Poverty is the Object of our Scorn? We are indeed a Nation the moſt capable of any in the World, of raiſing Religious Edifices; we want (bleſſed be God for it) neither for Art nor for Riches; the *one thing needful*, is a Heart to go about it. Our worthy Anceſtors of this Iſland, were for nothing more Famous, than for their zealous Regard to Religion; and they have left many ſtanding Monuments of it, which remain unto this Day, and are (its pity there ſhou'd be ſo juſt Reaſon to complain) ready to drop for want of being repair'd.

I do not ſpeak this (Gentlemen, and dearly Beloved) to your Shame; if I ſhou'd offer at it, this very Place, in which we now ſtand, wou'd be Witneſs againſt me, and teſtify for you to your Immortal Commendation. Bleſſed be God! for putting it into your Hearts, thus to revive the decaying Vertues of the Age, by ſetting it ſuch a lively Example of a publick Spirit: God grant that it may provoke others to a pious Imitation, that they may go and do likewiſe, when they ſhall behold ſo fair a Copy before their Eyes. Let this generous Inſtance of yours ſtop the Mouth of that ſtingy Objection, that the Exigency of the Times will not afford to build Churches,

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that 'twill be time enough to think of that when the Wars are over: Let what you have ſo commendably done, ſhew how eaſily paying Taxes, and building Churches, may be reconcil'd to a willing mind. You have not only begun, but (which inhaunceth the Glory of it) have happily compleated this laudable Undertaking, at a time, when the National Exigencies cried ſo loudly upon you for large and conſtant Supplies; when the Charges upon your Eſtates ran ſo very high, and the Product of them ſo very low; yet you cou'd find out a means how to raiſe up your Church, under the heavy Burthen of a long and expenſive War, which makes you ſtand alone without any Parallel in this Kingdom. But what need I multiply Words in Praiſe of what can ſpeak ſo ſufficiently for it ſelf? I ſhall therefore now to proceed to the

Second Thing which I am to ſhew, and that is wherein this Reverence, due to God's Sanctuary, does principally conſiſt. And under this Injunction there are theſe three Things more eſpecially intended; Firſt the Place it ſelf; Secondly its Ordinances; Thirdly its Officers. The

Firſt Object then of our Reverence is the Houſe of God, the holy Place where his Honour dwelleth, tho' not by any local Confinement, yet by way of ſpecial Preſence: Accordingly we have God's ſolemn Promiſe, that *where two or three are gather'd together in his Name, there he will be in the midſt of them.* When we are going therefore to the Houſe of Divine Worſhip, we are ſeriouſly to conſider that we are drawing near to God's Preſence, and therefore we ought to approach with Fear and Trembling, and to behave our ſelves with that awful Reſpect and Reverence, that is due to the Courts of the Lords Houſe.

When we conſider that we are not to enter the Palace of any Earthly Prince, without taking ſpecial heed to our Behaviour, that it be ſerious, grave and full of the profoundeſt Reſpect; (I ſay) when we come to ſtand in the Preſence of a King, (who is but a poor faint Shadow of God's dreadful and unapproachable Majeſty) we ought to take ſuch exact Care of our Deportment, that it be full of Humility and low Obeiſance; with what ſerious Reverence then, and humble Proſtration both of Soul and Body, ſhould we draw near to that Great God, with whom we have to do, who is a conſuming Fire, and who is able with the leaſt Breath of his Noſtrils, to caſt us into Hell? How ſhou'd we, when we call to mind that God is in this Place, be aſtoniſh'd and afraid, and ready to cry out in the pious Extacy of the good Patriarch *Jacob*, how dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the Houſe of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven!

Now that we are to pay ſuch a reverent and religious Reſpect to ſuch Places as are ſet apart for the Solemnity of God's Worſhip, we are not only taught by the Wiſe Man, *Eccleſ.* 5. 1. *Keep thy Foot when thou goeſt into the Houſe of God*; but we are commanded

manded by the All-wise God himself. And what else can we conclude, if we seriously attend to that remarkable Passage in *Exod.* 3. 5. where *Moses*, when he approach'd near the Burning-Bush, in which the Lord was present, was commanded to *put off his Shoes?* which was then a Right of Reverence, not only among the *Jews*, but other Eastern Nations, as putting off the Hat is a Token of Respect and Deference amongst us.

We are to remember therefore, as often as we come hither, that the Ground whereon we stand is Holy Ground; that it is the Place where the great *Jehovah* hath set his Name, which is Holy and Reverend; that we are here to pay Homage to him that hath fearfully and wonderfully made us, and that hath so miraculously redeem'd us. Can we then come into his tremendous Presence, with those careless, indevout and uncompos'd Airs, that are more becoming the Theatre, than the House of Prayer? Dare we rush into the sacred Courts of the Lord's House with a rude and unseemly Behaviour, when we consider that the Great God of Heaven and Earth is in this Place, who hath the Keys of Heaven and Hell, and who holds our very Souls in his Hand? 'Tis our forgetfulness of the Divine Presence that makes us so regardless of our Deportment in God's House, otherwise we should never come into it, without being suitably affected in our Minds with the Sacredness of that Great and Glorious Majesty, before whom we come hither to fall down and Worship.

We read, That the Place where our Blessed Lord was once Transfigur'd, was afterwards call'd the *Holy Mount*, and look'd upon as Sacred from that dazling Glory that then over-shadow'd it. And the Holy Place of the Tabernacle was such a sanctify'd and peculiar Enclosure, that no unhallow'd Person was ever to invade it under the Penalty of present Death; none but purified and consecrated Persons were to appear there. And what do all the Cleansings and Washings under the Old Law point out unto us, but that we shou'd offer up clean Hearts, as well as clean Hands, in the House of God's Worship? And that we prepare our selves duly with a grave and serious Frame of Mind, when we come hither to meet God, and not to draw near to him (as the manner of Hypocrites and Dissemblers is) with our Lips only, whilst our Hearts are far from him; otherwise we do in Fact only Mock and Affront that God, whom in pretence we come to Worship.

It's true, we are not in our Christian Churches ty'd up to all that long Train of Rites and Ceremonies that belong'd to the Jewish Temple, yet are we strictly oblig'd to distinguish them from all other Places, by a reverend and grave Behaviour when we enter them; to consider that the grand Business that we come hither upon, is to present our selves before the Great God that made us, and all the World, and that giveth Life and

and Breath to every thing; to acknowledge his Bounty, and to aſcribe unto the Lord Worſhip and Power; to celebrate his juſt Praiſes, to confeſs our entire Dependance upon him for the Support of our Beings, to give God the Honour due unto his Name, and to worſhip him with an Holy Worſhip, and to teſtify by our humble and devout Behaviour, that God is wonderful in his Holy Places; and tho' he does not now appear in a viſible *Shechina*, as he was wont to diſplay himſelf in the Ancient Sanctuary; yet in our modern Oratories, the Lord is ever preſent in the Aſſembly of the Saints, tho' after an inviſible manner, and takes an eſpecial notice how we demean our ſelves in his Courts; whether we diligently apply our minds to obſerve the Goings of God in his Sanctuary, or whether we are regardleſs of that awful Preſence, before whom we ſtand; whether we Worſhip him in Sincerity and Truth, or whether we only Flatter with our Lips. We muſt remember that God will not be mocked; he requires that we ſhould glorify him with our Body, and in our Spirit, or elſe in vain do we Worſhip him. God will not accept of our Service, if it be perform'd after a careleſs and indevout manner.

I remember that 'tis ſaid of *Auguſtus Cæſar*, that being invited to dine with a *Roman* Citizen, who us'd him with ſuch a familiar Freedom, as if the Emperour and he had been only equal Companions; the great *Cæſar* rebukes his unſeemly and unmannerly Behaviour, with this ſhort but ſharp Reprimand, *Sir, I thought that you and I had not been ſuch Intimate Acquaintance.*

When we preſent our ſelves before the Lord, we muſt learn to keep our due Diſtance, to conſider that God is in Heaven, and that we are but poor Duſt and Aſhes, viler in reſpect of the Almighty, than the moſt contemptible Inſect, or Atom, is in reſpect of our ſelves. And therefore to walk humbly before him, to pay always the moſt ſacred Reſpect and Veneration to his Sanctuary; and to remember what St. *Chryſoſtom* ſays, *That the Church is no Shop or Market-Houſe, but the Place of Angels, the Place of Archangels, the Palace of God, Heaven it ſelf*; and to conſider ſeriouſly what another excellent Father adviſeth, That if it be an irreverend thing to ſit in the Preſence of any great Man, to whom you owe a high Regard and ſingular Reſpect, how much more indecent muſt it be to do ſo in the Preſence of God, the Angel of Prayer ſtanding by? Now it was not only the Opinion of the *Jews*, that the Bleſſed Angels did frequent their Aſſemblies, and join with them in Conſort to ſing Praiſes to God in their Synagogues, but the ancient Chriſtians had as venerable an Opinion of their Churches and Places of Divine Worſhip; as appears from their frequent urging the Angelical Preſence, for a ſtrong Motive to a reverend Behaviour in God's Houſe. And if we have loſt their bleſſed Preſence ſince, have we not reaſon to fear that our rude and indecent Behavi-

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our hath chaſed away thoſe bleſſed Spirits from their Aboad, and forc'd them to quit our Company, becauſe we have ſo egregiouſly profain'd the Temple, by bringing the *Moabite* and the *Ammonite* into it? I mean ſuch impure Thoughts, as are little better than a down-right Affront to the Majeſty of this Holy Place.

It were indeed impoſſible to reckon up, as well as ſcandalous to mention, all the Topics of Diſcourſe, and idle Impertinences, by which too many of us profane the Sanctuary, who when they ſhou'd be preparing their Hearts to call upon God, are unfitting themſelves for their Duty, either by entertaining one another with fooliſh Jeſtings, which (as the Apoſtle ſaith) *are not convenient*, and in this Place above all others certainly the moſt unſufferable; or elſe by talking of their Worldly Concerns, and by this means in a great meaſure (if not altogether) incapacitating themſelves for the Buſineſs they came about, which is to mind the Affairs of another and a better World.

Alaſs, my Brethren! our whole Buſineſs here is to Worſhip God, to be intent upon that, and as much as is poſſible, to baniſh all other Thoughts out of our Hearts, to leave the World behind us when we enter into God's Preſence, to compoſe our Minds, to adorn and fit them with thoſe previous Meditations, that may the better qualify us for the Duties we are going upon; that ſo when we come at our Devotions, we may be able to ſay with that great Pattern of Piety, Holy *David*, *My Heart is fix'd O God, my Heart is fix'd.*

When we read, in the Parable of our Bleſſed Saviour, concerning the Man that ventur'd to come to the Marriage-Feaſt, without having on the Wedding-Garment; with what Shame and Diſgrace he was thruſt out of Doors, for his bold and unworthy Preſumption! How can we chuſe but conclude, That God will not accept of us as true and devout Worſhippers, unleſs we put on an Holy Frame of Mind before we go to the Temple; unleſs we fit and ſet our Hearts at rights before we come to offer up our Petitions to God? If we ruſh into the Divine Preſence without this neceſſary Ornament of a devout Preparation of Soul, how can we expect otherwiſe than to be rejected for our ſlovenly Appearance, and that God, who loves to be worſhip'd in the Beauty of Holineſs, will abhor our Offerings for their Indecency; that he will regard our Worſhip as little as we do our ſelves, and give us no other Reply than that angry Reſentment mention'd by the Prophet *Iſaiah* 1. 13, 14, 15 Verſes; *Bring no more vain Oblations; Incenſe is an Abomination to me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Aſſemblies I cannot away with; it is Iniquity, even your ſolemn Meeting. Your new Moons and your appointed Feaſts my Soul hateth, they are a Trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye ſpread forth your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes from you; yea, when ye make many Prayers, I will not hear.* So that if we do not appear before God

God with a ſuitable Reverence, we have juſt reaſon to fear, that our very Prayers will be turn'd into Sin, and our Medicine, for want of a skilful Preparation, will be converted into Poiſon.

Wherefore I cannot ſufficiently commend that laudable and religious Cuſtom of thoſe devout Worſhippers of God, who not only lay aſide ſome ſhort ſpace before they go into the publick Audience, to recollect themſelves in Private, and to put their Minds into a fit Poſture of Addreſs; but when they are come into the Church, to ſecure their Thoughts from ſtealing away from their proper Buſineſs, till Divine Service begins, will be ſure to keep them employ'd about heavenly Contemplations, and either by thinking or reading, prevent them from ſtarting aſide. On the contrary, I want Words to expreſs the ſhameful and impious Practice of thoſe indevout and profane Perſons, who not only make no Scruple of treading God's Courts without any preparatory Meditations, but come into it in that careleſs and irreverend manner, and behave themſelves there with ſo little Gravity and ſerious Attention, as if their main Buſineſs was only to gape and look about them, to ſhew their own new Modes, or to admire the Neatneſs of others. This careleſs and unworthy Behaviour, is ſo far from beſpeaking God to be in this Place, that it rather ſignifies that we neither regard Him nor his Worſhip; and therefore thoſe that are guilty of it, have juſt reaſon to dread, leſt their Prayers ſhould be ſo far from being ſet forth as the Incenſe in his Sight, that they will be as Nauſeous to God as Smoak in his Noſtrils. Certainly, if we would but ſeriouſly conſider, that God is in the midſt of the Sanctuary, with his Angelical Retinue about him, and that his All-ſeeing Eye is upon us, we cou'd never behave our ſelves heedleſly and indevoutly in the Congregation; but ſhou'd readily join in all the Holy Offices and Ordinances of the Church: Which is the

Second Branch of that Reverence which we owe to God's Sanctuary. Now theſe Holy Offices are Prayer, Thanks-giving, Hearing the Word of God, and Communicating with the Faithful in the Lord's Supper; all which are to be performed with the Profoundeſt Serioufneſs and Veneration. When we confeſs our Sins to Almighty God, we ought to do it with a broken and a contrite Heart, with unfeign'd Tears and the deepeſt Sorrow: When we pray to him, that is the God that heareth Prayer, for the neceſſary Supplies either for Soul or Body, we ſhou'd do it upon our bended Knees, the proper Poſture for humble Supplicants: When we praiſe God, we ſhou'd do it luſtily, and with a good Courage, with Hearts full of Joy and Thankfulneſs, and rouſe up every Faculty both of Soul and Body, to join in a Bleſſed Conſort. When we hear his Word, we ſhould take heed how we hear, and not only be attentive to it, but as new-born Babes, deſire the ſincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby; be as glad of this Heavenly Food, as one that findeth the richeſt

Treaſure. And when we approach to the Sacred Table, we ſhou'd be careful to draw near with Reverence, and never dare to compaſs God's Altar without having our Hearts ſprinkled from an Evil Conſcience; but as oft as we appear before the Divine Preſence, take eſpecial heed to purify our ſelves even as he is Pure.

There are theſe three Cautions about the Worſhip of God, which I beg leave to recommend t'ye, more eſpecially at this time, that ye be frequent, early, and devout at it.

Firſt, We ſhou'd ſhew our Reverence to the Sanctuary by viſiting it frequently. The *Jews* had not only their continual Sacrifice, but ſet Hours of Prayer, which were conſtantly and ſtrictly obſerv'd: The very Heathens, of old, had their daily Sacrifices; and the *Turks* to this day have their Service perform'd every day five times in their *Moſchos*: And if we look upon the Primitive Chriſtians, by whoſe Principles we are reform'd, we ſhall find that they had not only Prayers, but the Holy Sacrament adminiſtred every Day; and when Perſecutions diſturb'd their Aſſembling by Day, they had their Liturgy, Euchariſt and Hymns by Night, as *Euſebius* informs us: They were careful to Pray, not only in Seaſon, but out of Seaſon; and cannot we find it in our Hearts to afford one Hour in the Day to perform that Duty we owe to God in whom we Live and Move, and have our Being, and on whoſe free and undeſerv'd Bounty we entirely depend for Life and Breath, and all Things? Can we reflect upon this without Bluſhing? Eſpecially thoſe who have Time and Leiſure, and no Worldly Avocations to keep them from the daily Worſhip! [It were much to be wiſh'd, and I hope may with ſome Aſſurance be expected, that thoſe Worthy Gentlemen, who have taken ſo much care in raiſing this beautiful Fabric, will in time extend their Religious Thoughts a little further, and contrive ſome means to ſettle and incourage the daily Service of God in this Place; and let me humbly preſume to recommend this to their Piety and Wiſdom, as the finiſhing Stroak of the whole Work, as the very Top and Crown of what hath been already done; and as the Charge of it wou'd be little, ſo I need not tell you what a great and publick Benefit this would be to the whole Neighbourhood, and how ſignally it wou'd Intitle thoſe that ſhall make this pious Proviſion, for that conſtant Worſhip, to the juſt Praiſe of God and good Men.]

The Second Thing that I wou'd recommend t'ye, concerning the Worſhip of God, is, that ye would be ſure always to come early at it. 'Tis a very odd and ſhameful Cuſtom in ſome, that would yet be rank'd among the devouter ſort of Worſhippers, to delay their coming to the Houſe of Prayer, till the greateſt part of the Service is over. But ſurely they wou'd do well to conſider, that by thus depriving themſelves of the Benefit of the Confeſſion and Abſolution, they do partially excommunicate themſelves from the Bleſſings and Beneſits of the Church; if we ex-

pect

pect to find God, certainly we ought to ſeek him early and diligently; if we hope to obtain his gracious Pardon, we ought to make a ſeaſonable, as well as humble, application to the Divine Mercy. Thoſe therefore do highly injure their own Souls, who are not careful to come at the beginning of Prayers. We ſhould ſtrive if we would reap the whole advantage of God's Worſhip, to come the firſt into the Church when its Gates are open, and to go the laſt out of it; to take ſuch delight in God's Houſe as Holy *David* did, who in *Pſal.* 27. 4. makes it the higheſt Aim of his Deſires, his chief Happineſs and Ambition (if I may ſo ſay) that he might be permitted to have dwelt in the Houſe of the Lord all the days of his Life, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to viſit his Temple. But

Thirdly, The Main Caution is yet behind, and that is, That we behave our ſelves devoutly at God's Worſhip, without which, tho' we come never ſo often and never ſo early, we come to little purpoſe. This is the Salt that muſt ſeaſon all our Religious Performances, without which our Worſhip will become flat and and unſavoury, and our Religion as Sounding Braſs and a Tinkling Symbal, nothing but Noiſe and Pageantry.

It is indeed the great Glory of our Church that we have a Religion pure and undefiled, a Worſhip Reform'd and Conſtituted according to the moſt Primitive Standard, truly Apoſtolical in its Doctrine, and in its Diſcipline wholeſome, devout and regular. Oh what pity is it, that its excellent Beauty ſhould be ſo ſhamefully ſullied by the Indevotion of its Members!

I do not deny (God forbid I ſhould!) but that we have ſtill ſuch, and a great many ſuch, I truſt, as worſhip the Lord in Spirit and in Truth; and I pray God daily to add to the pious number. But ought it not to be confeſſed, (amongſt Friends at leaſt) that if we look into the generality of our Congregations, there is not that Decency and Order, that Gravity and laudable Decorum, that outward Beauty of Holineſs, that is to be obſerved amongſt thoſe whoſe Doctrine is yet ſo ſcandalouſly corrupted with the Traditions of Men, and their Worſhip defil'd and over-run with the unſufferable Weeds of Superſtitious and Idolatrous Innovations.

I do not ſpeak this, as any particular Reflection upon the Congregation here preſent; but theſe are ſpots generally to be taken notice of in all our Religious Aſſemblies: There is not that Uniformity and Exactneſs of Behaviour in our Churches, which becomes the Majeſty and Solemnity of God's Worſhip, as we could wiſh for: Inſomuch that if an Infidel-Spy ſhou'd drop into one of our Congregations, and ſee with what Indecency and Indevotion ſome behave themſelves at Divine Service, if he were to chooſe his Religion, he wou'd hardly make ours his choice, eſpecially if he ſhou'd have read over the excellent Precepts of *Pythagoras*, which ſo ſtrictly enjoin, that the Gods muſt not be worſhipped in paſſing by, that is, in any careleſs or heedleſs manner; or if he ſhou'd but

call to mind the Religious Care of *Numa*, a Heathen Prince, who inſtituted a Set of Officers on purpoſe to ſtir up the People to Devotion, and circumſpect Behaviour at their Sacrifices; or if he ſhou'd reflect only upon the devout Order amongſt the *Mahometans*, who ſuffer none to ſit in their Houſes of Worſhip, nor to pray without Proſtration; when he ſhall have compar'd all this together, with the ſcandalous Indecency that is to be obſerv'd in ſo many (nay, I muſt not mince the matter) in moſt of our Churches, can we hope, I ſay, that he wou'd be won over to our Communion? or rather is it not much to be fear'd, that ſuch a View as this wou'd rather harden and confirm him in his Infidelity? Wherefore, for the Honour and Credit of our moſt excellent Religion, if no other motive will prevail, let us be ſure always to pay a ſpecial Reverence, and ſolemn Veneration, to all its Ordinances.

Laſtly, as you ought to reverence the Ordinances, ſo alſo the Officers of God's Houſe, I mean thoſe that are appointed to miniſter in Holy Things. I ſhall not ſtand at this time to prove this Point by its proper Arguments, [partly becauſe I wou'd not willingly incur the Cenſure of being Tedious, but chiefly to avoid what is counted by ſome as a worſe Crime, the Preaching up the Honour of my own Function.]

Let it ſuffice only to put you in mind of thoſe high and honourable Titles, by which they are dignified and diſtinguiſh'd, as that they are the Ambaſſadors of Chriſt, the Meſſengers that bring glad Tidings of Salvation, Shepherds of the Flock of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God: That they are an Order of Men, who have the peculiar Office and Truſt, that weighty Charge committed to them, to watch over you for Good, to ſtand in the Gap betwixt God and You; to make Attonement for your Sins, to intercede for your Pardon, and to pronounce it in God's ſtead; to bleſs you, and to pray for you, that ye may walk in all the Ordinances of the Lord blameleſs and irreprehenſible, and ſo at laſt may be preſented unto Chriſt, as a chaſt Virgin. In ſhort, our Office is only to admoniſh you to refuſe the Evil, and to chuſe the Good; to beſeech you to love your ſelves, and to take Pity upon your poor immortal Souls; and, in a word, to direct you to the true way that leadeth to Life Everlaſting. And if we uſe our conſtant Endeavours towards thoſe noble Purpoſes, as well by our Examples, as by our Precepts, conſcientiouſly and faithfully, we cannot well miſs of being honoured, even for our very Work's ſake, and of being both rever'd and belov'd.

In confidence of which, I now recommend you to the Bleſſing of God, [and the due Conſideration of what hath been ſaid.

FINIS.